

To: Members of the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding

From: Jeff Zdrale, 1351 Silverwood Lane, Neenah 54956 (920-722-0693)

Date: April 23, 2018

Subject: **Why do we Have a Private School Voucher System in Wisconsin?**

Why do we have a taxpayer subsidized private school voucher program in Wisconsin? Is it because:

- a. Out state constitution requires it? No. The State is required to establish public schools in districts which shall be "as nearly uniform as practicable" and shall be free and without any tuition charge for students.
- b. Private schools are just better than public schools? There is no research that gives a consistent "Yes" to this question based on any type of criterion.
- c. Parents are not given any real choices regarding methods, locations or environments of instruction in the public sector? No. There are charter schools, inter and intra-district choice options, magnet schools, virtual schools, homeschooling and home-bound instruction.
- d. Both systems are equally transparent in reference to governance, financial management, due process for discipline, etc.? No. Private schools are minimally accountable to the state and not accountable at all to the community at large except for the parents they serve.

I think the underlying reason for this diversion and diminution of public resources for public education stems from a deep-seated ideology that has permeated our state government during the past eight years.

The tenets of this ideology are:

- a. The private sector can do things better than any governmental effort. That's why efforts to privatize Social Security, the postal service, and the VA are right on target.
- b. Public money used for private purposes will reap rewards for everyone in the long run. Giving more to the "haves" will find its way down to helping the "have nots."
- c. Private enterprises can be trusted to use and steward these public funds well. There's no need for burdensome regulations or accountability standards from government. The free reign that WEDC has been given as it has doled out funds to companies without knowing for sure if any job benefits have resulted is a good case in point here.
- d. Let the market place decide on what services will thrive and which ones will wither away. A little competition will keep these government "monopolies" on their toes.

Conservatism has a place in the spectrum of our state's governmental philosophies. But it needs to be checked when it discredits and insufficiently supports institutions like the public schools—systems that the state is constitutionally obligated to nurture and promote.

The Assembly and Senate must steward public moneys for programs and services that are accountable to you as our public representatives. These efforts are designed to serve everyone. That's why everyone supports them with their taxes.

Private schools do not have a public mission. They are not designed to serve the public. They do not have to be accountable to the public. And yet the Wisconsin public continues to support them.

You need to stand for redirecting public school funds to what they are constitutionally meant to support...Wisconsin's public schools.